

LANDSCAPE PATTERNS



Norfolk neighborhoods have a marvelous mix of flowering trees, shade trees, perennials, hedges, ornamental grasses, ground covers, and paving materials that create a distinct sense of place and character. Neighborhoods of various eras have a broad range of street types and public planting areas so the feel and character of each neighborhood is distinct. This section of the Pattern Book is intended to provide guidance for homeowners regarding the private landscape elements found on individual lots within these neighborhoods.

The landscape elements that constitute the front yards are the primary focus for this section. These elements include steps, walls, piers, sidewalk and driveway materials, fencing, lighting and accessories as well as “softscape” materials such as plantings and hedges. This is where the landscaping of the individual house contributes to the overall character of the street.

Houses in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century neighborhoods often create distinct edges with landscaping in the lots to provide a stronger sense of transition from the private realm of the house to the more public realm of the sidewalk and the street. The nineteenth-century neighborhoods typically have shallower front yards that are well planted, sometimes overflowing to the sidewalk or have short lawns edged with brick between the public sidewalk and the foundation planting of the house. The early twentieth-century neighborhoods have deeper front lawns that feature a variety of trees, flower beds, groundcover zones, hedges, and fencing.

Post-war neighborhoods are distinguished by broader lawns with more defined accent planting close to the house. The sidewalk and streets are also broader and less defined by tree lines or house fronts. While the plant palettes and choices are extensive in this region, the inventory of other hardscape elements such as fences, walls, walks, and driveways are important design elements that must be carefully considered.

Landscape Elements

Front Yards

The majority of Norfolk front yards are composed of a few key elements ranging from canopy and ornamental trees, foundation plantings (including ornamental trees and shrubs), beds of flowering perennials and annuals, groundcover, expanses of grass lawns, and “hardscape” materials such as sidewalks, steps, low walls, fences, and driveways.

Due to the shallow depth of the front yards in nineteenth-century neighborhoods, canopy trees are not typical. However, extensive foundation planting and plots of green lawn edged with flowerbeds, brick or stone are common, as is the use of fencing, typically cast iron with or without brick piers. The distinct boundary between public and private—whether through a material change or vertical element is characteristic of this era.

The deeper front yards of the early twentieth-century neighborhoods allow the green lawn to become the base for a variety of planting beds, hedges, shrubs, and a mix of canopy and ornamental trees that frame the view of the house. The use of planting beds—whether groundcover, flowers, or low shrubbery—define the lawn as a “room.” Houses of this era are typically raised and many have large porches and stairs providing another transition area as one approaches the entrance.

The deep and wide green lawns of the front yards of post-war neighborhoods typically feature smaller scale landscape elements such as simple foundation plantings (typically low shrubbery with some flowering bushes) and an occasional small, ornamental tree.

Foundation Planting

Foundation planting varies from low, manicured evergreens to brightly colored flowering bushes, to groundcover. All “ground” the house to the front yard.

Sidewalk Edging

Sidewalk edge planting, which varies from ornamental grasses, to colorful perennials and textured groundcovers, enhances the entrance and guides visitors to many Norfolk houses, regardless of the era.

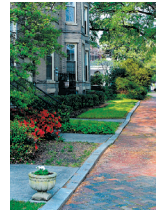
Hedges

Hedges are found throughout Norfolk, and have been used historically as a transition between the public realm of the sidewalk and the front lawn of the private lot as well as a definer between house lots.

Other definers of individual lots include any plant material such as ornamental grasses, low shrubbery, and even groundcover that is visually high enough to define the room of the front yard.



Early-twentieth-century neighborhood front yards



Nineteenth-century neighborhood front yards



A post-war neighborhood front yard



Foundation planting (post-war neighborhood)



Foundation plantings in early-twentieth-century neighborhoods



Foundation plantings (nineteenth-century neighborhoods)



Foundation planting (early-twentieth-century neighborhood)



A variety of sidewalk edging defines the entrance to the house



Hedges and gates define the front yard



Turn-of-the-century front yard

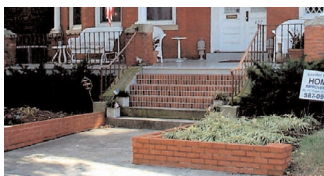


A variety of plantings define individual front yards

Landscape Elements



Concrete steps and walk



Low, brick walls edge the sidewalk



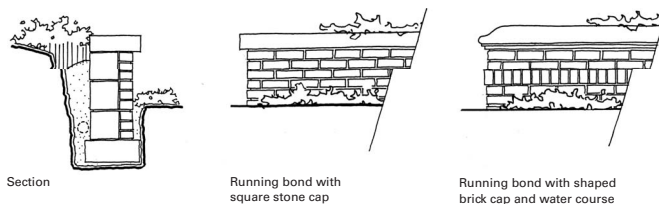
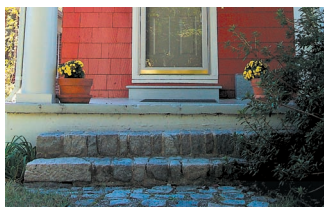
Historic photo of a stone wall



Brick sidewalk and steps



Brick piers capped with stone



Section

Running bond with square stone cap

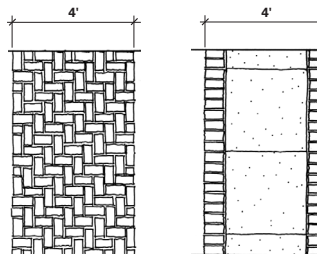
Running bond with shaped brick cap and water course



A low, stone wall



Low, stone wall and steps



Brick walk

Concrete walk (with brick border)

Stone walk

Walls, Piers & Steps

One of the most common landscaping elements is the low brick or stone wall defining the front yard. Typically between 12 and 18 inches high, these walls enclose either a planting edge or simply the front lawn. Often these walls will turn to follow the private sidewalk as an edging and create the low piers that border the front steps to the porch. These piers are usually capped with stone. If there is a slight rise to the yard, there will be two sets of steps leading to the front porch.

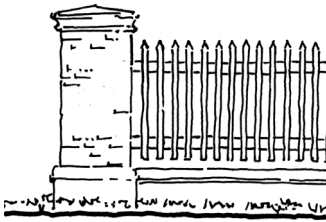
Quite often the steps leading to the front porch are brick. Although the most common material for steps is concrete, steps of stone, either rough cut or smooth, are found as well.

Sidewalk Paving & Driveway Pavement Surfaces

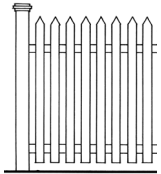
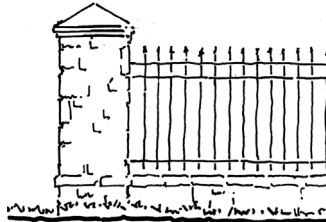
Private sidewalks found in Norfolk range from the typical concrete to brick, stone, or even terra cotta tile. Brick sidewalks, both public and private—very common in the nineteenth-century neighborhoods—are also found throughout Norfolk. Concrete is the most common sidewalk material, sometimes edged with brick. Also found are stepping stones set within the front lawn.

Driveways are typically concrete, usually smooth, but exposed aggregate ones are also common. A variation of the typical driveway found in Norfolk is the type that has only two tire paths in concrete with grass between.

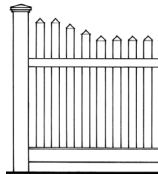




Wall and fence combinations



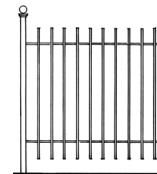
Flat picket fence



Square picket fence



Ornate iron fence



Simple iron fence



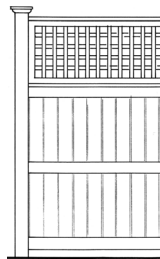
Fencing and Screening

Fences provide definition between public and private spaces and are an integral component of Norfolk landscaping.

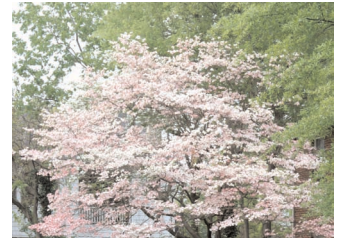
Wood fences are the most common, especially in the early-twentieth- and post-war neighborhoods. Typically 30 to 36 inches high, these fences have either flat wide boards that are decoratively cut or square pickets. Privacy fences should only be used in the rear yard and should not exceed 6 feet in height. The upper two feet should have 50 percent opacity (a lattice or grid pattern, for example).

Very common in the oldest Norfolk neighborhoods, wrought iron fences—with or without brick piers—are typically 3 feet in height and can range from simple, vertical balusters to very ornate geometries.

It is recommended that air conditioning and mechanical equipment and any trash enclosures be screened from public view with shrubs, hedges, walls, fences, or a combination of those elements.



Six-foot-high privacy fence



Garden Features

Norfolk houses and lots have a variety of elements that enhance the front, side and rear yards. Trellises, arbors, secluded sitting areas, and decorative fencing elements provide visual interest, additional planting areas, and private, outdoor space.



Front Yard Lighting & Accessories

In addition to streetlights, private homeowners often augment their property with freestanding lights, typically near the front property line next to the driveway, as well as porch lights or sidelights on the house at the entrance.

In the photos at right, the light poles provide a location for the house number as well as a birdfeeder. Front yard accessories that match the materials of the house, such as a planter that doubles as a mailbox (see photo), make attractive accents.

